

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A method for processing a single eroding futures contract comprising:

defining ~~[[an]] the single~~ eroding futures contract ~~involving a single futures contract having to include~~ a defined size and a plurality of defined final settlement events, wherein the single eroding futures contract specifies a period of time over which the plurality of defined final settlement events are scheduled to occur;

executing trades between buyers and sellers of the single eroding futures contract on a regulated exchange, wherein the single eroding futures contract has an initial margin associated therewith; and

upon occurrence of one of the plurality of defined final settlement events, finally settling part of the single eroding futures contract, wherein the initial margin changes as a result of the finally settling of part of the single eroding futures contract.

2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising executing trades involving a remaining balance of the single eroding futures contract which has not finally settled.

3. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising clearing a finally settled portion of the single eroding futures contract after a defined final settlement event.

4. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising generating reports reflecting activity related to the trading, settlement and final settlement of the single eroding futures contract.

5. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the defined period corresponds to a specific week.

6. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the defined period corresponds to a specific month.

7. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein finally settling comprises reducing an open position value of the single eroding futures contract by an amount equal to a quantity of the contract that was finally settled.

8. (cancelled)

9. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein each final settlement event occurs at a contract-specified settlement time and a final settlement occurs at each settlement time.

10. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the single eroding futures contract is a fixed quantity futures contract.

11. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the single eroding futures contract is a variable quantity futures contract.

12. (currently amended) A method for mitigating risk related to price volatility of a commodity comprising:

establishing a futures position involving a variable quantity single futures contract traded on a regulated exchange wherein the variable quantity single futures contract specifies a starting size, a settlement period, and a ~~specified~~ delivery location, wherein the ~~defined~~ specified settlement period covers a range of time, and wherein the variable quantity single futures contract has an initial margin associated therewith; and

during the ~~defined~~ specified settlement period, finally settling a portion of the variable quantity single futures contract, wherein if the variable quantity single futures contract remains open, a changed initial margin is associated therewith.

13. (currently amended) The method of claim 12 further comprising clearing the finally settled portion of the variable quantity single futures contracts.

14. (currently amended) The method of claim 12 further comprising trading an unsettled balance of the finally settled portion of the variable quantity single futures contract.

15. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein the defined period comprises a specific week.

16. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein the defined period comprises a specific month.

17. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein the act of finally settling comprises cash settlement.

18. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein the act of finally settling comprises physical delivery.

19-25. (cancelled)